

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-11509-4 - Gentlemen of a Company: English Players in Central and Eastern Europe, 1590-1660

Jerzy Limon

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

---

## Gentlemen of a Company

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-11509-4 - Gentlemen of a Company: English Players in Central and Eastern Europe, 1590-1660

Jerzy Limon

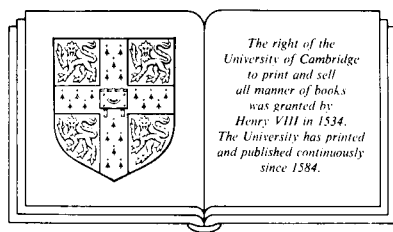
Frontmatter

[More information](#)

# Gentlemen of a Company

*English Players in  
Central and Eastern Europe, 1590–1660*

Jerzy Limon



Cambridge University Press

Cambridge

London New York New Rochelle

Melbourne Sydney

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-11509-4 - Gentlemen of a Company: English Players in Central and Eastern Europe, 1590-1660

Jerzy Limon

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS

Cambridge, New York, Melbourne, Madrid, Cape Town, Singapore, São Paulo, Delhi

Cambridge University Press

The Edinburgh Building, Cambridge CB2 8RU, UK

Published in the United States of America by Cambridge University Press, New York

[www.cambridge.org](http://www.cambridge.org)

Information on this title: [www.cambridge.org/9780521115094](http://www.cambridge.org/9780521115094)

© Cambridge University Press 1985

This publication is in copyright. Subject to statutory exception and to the provisions of relevant collective licensing agreements, no reproduction of any part may take place without the written permission of Cambridge University Press.

First published 1985

This digitally printed version 2009

*A catalogue record for this publication is available from the British Library*

*Library of Congress Catalogue Card Number: 84-28592*

ISBN 978-0-521-26304-7 hardback

ISBN 978-0-521-11509-4 paperback

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-11509-4 - Gentlemen of a Company: English Players in Central and Eastern Europe, 1590-1660

Jerzy Limon

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

## Contents

List of illustrations	<i>page</i> vii
Preface	ix
Introduction	i
PART I THE BALTIC ROUTE	
1 Gdańsk	37
2 Elbing	63
3 Königsberg	69
4 Pomerania	82
5 Livonia	91
PART II THE NOBLE PATRONS: THE HABSBURGS AND THE VASAS	
6 Warsaw	97
7 Bohemia	107
8 Austria	117
PART III THE THEATRES	
9 The Gdańsk Fencing-School	129
10 The Royal Theatre in Warsaw	137
APPENDIXES	
1 The documents	141
2 Entrance fees charged by English players in various towns	148
3 Recorded visits by English players to Central Europe	149
4 Principal players active in Central Europe	153
Notes	154
Bibliography	180
Index	186

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-11509-4 - Gentlemen of a Company: English Players in Central and Eastern Europe, 1590-1660

Jerzy Limon

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

## Illustrations

1	Towns visited by English players in Central and Eastern Europe (map by Andrzej Markowicz)	page xii
2	A view of Gdańsk (Dickman, c. 1620)	38
3	The Gdańsk Fencing-School (enlarged detail of Peter Willer's engraving reproduced by Reinhold Curicke in <i>Der Stadt Danzig historische Beschreibung</i> , Amsterdam and Gdańsk, 1687)	44
4	A conjectural reconstruction of the public theatre in Gdańsk (drawing by Andrzej Markowicz)	45
5	A view of Elbing (M. Christophori Hartknock, <i>Alt und Neues Preussen oder Preussischer Historien</i> , Frankfurt and Leipzig, 1684, p. 378)	64
6	A view of Balga (Hartknock, <i>Alt und neues Preussen oder Preussischer Historien</i> , p. 382)	66
7	The Duke's Castle at Königsberg (Friedrich Lahrs, <i>Das Königsberger Schloss</i> , Stuttgart, 1956, p. 73)	76
8	A view of Wolgast (first half of the seventeenth century)	84
9	The ducal Castle at Stettin (Martin Zeiler, <i>Topographia Electoratus Brandenburgici et Ducatus Pomeraniae</i> , Frankfurt-am-Main, 1652, vol. 1, illustration 52)	86
10	The Hradschin Castle in Prague (Bruin Georgius et Franciscus Hogenbergius, <i>Civitates orbis terrarum</i> , 1618, vol. v, p. 49)	108
11	A view of Graz showing the archducal Castle (Daniel Meissner, <i>Sciagraphia Cosmica</i> , Nürnberg, 1678, illustration C 1)	118
12	A view of Vienna (ibid., illustration C 2)	122

Illustrations 2–3, 5, 6, 8–12 are reproduced by permission of PAN Library in Gdańsk.

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-11509-4 - Gentlemen of a Company: English Players in Central and Eastern Europe, 1590-1660

Jerzy Limon

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

## Preface

SINCE E.K. Chambers devoted one of the chapters in his notable *The Elizabethan Stage* (1923) to the activity of professional English actors on the Continent in the sixteenth and the seventeenth centuries, not much has been written on the subject in English. The meagre list of publications includes a dozen or so articles scattered in specialized periodicals, and perhaps several chapters, or even paragraphs, in sundry books dealing with the acting profession in general. No matter how one looks at it, for some reason this intriguing phenomenon in European theatrical history has attracted little attention from English-speaking scholars, and this field of studies has, in fact, become a Continental speciality. Since about the middle of the nineteenth century, generations of scholars in Europe have been searching through archives and libraries, uncovering hundreds of pieces of evidence, which – when put together as if in a jigsaw puzzle – present to us a picture of English players' Continental activity of surprising scale and intensity.

However, if we stick to the jigsaw-puzzle metaphor, we may say that the picture is – as we look at it today – not complete, and although at first sight one would be able to recognize its significance, a closer analysis would reveal that a number of pieces are missing, which in consequence creates serious obstacles for any attempt to describe the picture in minute detail. The blank spaces may, of course, be filled with imagination, conjectures and hypotheses which might or might not be confirmed in the course of time. Thus, any newly discovered piece of evidence, however insignificant it may seem to an uninitiated person, becomes of major importance in this particular field of studies, for it fills the gap and at times may help to clarify significant sections of the whole picture.

Because the geography of Europe today is to a large extent coloured by the political situation and is, consequently, topsy-turvy (with Finland, for instance, belonging to the 'West', whereas the German Democratic Republic and Czechoslovakia belong to the 'East'), the title of this book needs some explanation. I have used the notion of 'Central and Eastern' Europe in its traditional geographical sense, without taking into account the politics of today. If on the other hand a scrupulous reader wanted to insist on the political situation in the sixteenth and the seventeenth centuries, it may be recalled that Prague, the capital of the Kingdom of Bohemia, had also for several centuries been the capital of the Holy Roman Empire of the German nation and, undoubtedly, for contemporaries this was the very centre and the

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-11509-4 - Gentlemen of a Company: English Players in Central and Eastern Europe, 1590-1660

Jerzy Limon

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

## P R E F A C E

heart of Europe. With this in mind, we are fully justified in labelling the neighbouring countries and provinces as Central European.

Almost all the major English acting companies performing on the Continent in the period under discussion may be traced in Central Europe. Their activity there was not restricted to a certain phase, or period, and, as the pieces of evidence provided and discussed below attempt to prove, this activity was not coincidental. On the contrary, Central Europe was clearly one of several distinct centres, where English acting companies found permanent employment and the noble patronage of the Kings of Poland and the Dukes of Brandenburg enabled a number of players to survive the Thirty Years War. This provides valid grounds for treating Central Europe as a distinct region in the history of English players' activity on the Continent, a fact generally neglected in this field of scholarship. For many scholars, English players' presence on the Continent was confined to Germany. This is reflected, among other things, by the most recurrent title of their works: 'Shakespeare in Germany' or the like. In point of fact, a title of this sort is misleading for at least two reasons: one, English theatrical activity on the Continent was neither dominated by Shakespeare as an actor, nor by Shakespeare the playwright (Shakespeare never went to Europe himself and the only link he had with the strolling players was that he knew some of them personally and that they included some of his plays in their repertory); and two, the activity of the English on the Continent was by no means confined to Germany, something which I hope to make clear.

Because more than sixty years have passed since E.K. Chambers published *The Elizabethan Stage*, mentioned above, and during that period no larger work on English strolling companies in general has appeared in English, I thought it reasonable and worthwhile to expand the Introduction to cover a somewhat wider field than the chapters which follow. This will provide the reader with rudimentary information about the origin, particularities and phases of English players' activity as a whole, and I hope that the Introduction in itself will prove useful to all students and scholars of both English and Continental theatrical history.

Parts of this book have already been published, or are in press. Thus, the Introduction incorporates a paper presented at the International Elizabethan Theatre Conference held in Waterloo, Ontario in June 1981. The chapter on Gdańsk is based on my Ph.D. dissertation to be published by the Gdańsk Learned Society. The chapter on Warsaw is an altered and enlarged version of my article published in Polish in *Pamiętnik Teatralny*. And the chapter devoted to the Gdańsk public theatre is based partly on my essay published in *Shakespeare Survey* 32 and on a paper presented at the annual meeting of the Shakespeare Association of America, held in San Francisco in 1979. The notes will provide the reader with bibliographical details.

Most of the archival materials used in this book have already been

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-11509-4 - Gentlemen of a Company: English Players in Central and Eastern Europe, 1590-1660

Jerzy Limon

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

## P R E F A C E

published. Because in a number of cases the originals were either lost or destroyed during the World Wars, I have been unable to verify the validity of their printed transcriptions. This is, for instance, the case with the archives in Stettin and Elbing. However, in most of the cases when the original documents have been preserved, it was possible to make sure that their printed form was properly transcribed. Such is the case in particular with the most valuable documents connected with the region – those from Gdańsk and Königsberg. In the State Archives in Gdańsk there is one of the largest collections of English players' original applications for leave to play, and the ducal archives of Königsberg have been fortunately preserved in Göttingen in West Germany. Some of these documents have been translated into English by other authors, and I have used these extensively, especially the ones translated by A. Cohn. Unless otherwise stated all the remaining translations of the originals are my own. These have been checked and revised by Dr Jeremy Adler of Westfield College, whose contribution to the last stages of this book cannot be over-estimated. In so far as they are modernized renderings, they are not sufficiently literal for academic purposes; however, specialists will find reference to the origins in the notes.

I wish to express my gratitude to all the people who encouraged and helped me to complete this book. This includes a number of scholars, archivists and librarians of many nationalities, a truly international family of people of good will, who provided me with invaluable pieces of information and critical remarks all of which contributed to the final shape of this book. They are too many to be mentioned by name and the only exception to this rule is Mr Neil Jones, who has generously devoted his precious time to smoothing the roughness of my English.



Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-11509-4 - Gentlemen of a Company: English Players in Central and Eastern Europe, 1590-1660

Jerzy Limon

Frontmatter

[More information](#)



1. Towns visited by English players in Central and Eastern Europe